

BAT  
FLU



13/04

Over here. No, not there – HERE. That’s it, sir – two metres. Jog on, ma’am - this isn’t Henley Regatta. I don’t see any Wombles, sir, do you? Let’s have a look in that bag. Ah, what’s this – *el vino collapso*? Very good, ma’am – you can toast the nurse you killed later. On your way now, fella. Get those knees up. Can’t have anarchy, that wouldn’t do at all. Ma’am, kindly remove that child. No, I’ll keep hold of the frisbee. You can apply to collect it in August. This is a designated exercise zone, sir, not a fucking scout camp.

Did you miss me? I know it’s been a while but you were never far from my thoughts. Well, sort of. Closer than trigonometry, a bit further than this bag of spicy Thai crackers, know what I mean? What you been up to then? Yeah, PornHub buffers for me too – deal with it. Got a personalised email from Soulseek, congratulating me on having heard every album ever recorded, which was quite nice.

What else in whogivesatoss news? Watched some Twitch live streams. I used to think avant-garde musicians’ biggest sin was sitting cross-legged on the floor during gigs – now I realise it’s talking about sourdough on Twitch chat. *Sourdough*! Even martial law doesn’t justify DIY breadmaking blather. Still, I enjoyed George Galloway’s Exploited karaoke stream: he totally nailed *Fuck The USA*.

Meanwhile, I’m suffering the mental anguish of knowing that my bedroom window’s *perfect* for sniping passing joggers – but where am I gonna get hold of an ArmaLite? It’s not like 2006, when I lived three doors up from Jeremy Corbyn’s office. Oh, one minor development to report – a Christian preacher’s been passing by my flat some evenings, urging Finchley Road to repent. Dunno why: two minutes of Dominic Raab would be enough to persuade the Almighty to ditch this dustbowl experiment and abandon us to the lurgi.

Think I’ll order some beer online – what could go wrong?

15/04

Wilbur Chen is not on Zoom to lark about. Sporting a bow tie more suited to a man twice his age, the University of Maryland associate professor explains that it’ll take 10 years to develop a fully FDA-approved Covid-19 vaccine. Even then, there won’t be ‘one’ vaccine but a stream of competing elixirs, tweaked and retweaked to ‘second guess’ the virus’ next mutation– and, most importantly, to secure lucrative distribution deals.

Our current annual flu jabs, fine-honed after decades of research and testing, still only have a 50% success rate anyway, Chen adds – so the idea we’ll be lining up for our ‘Rona shots and resuming normal service come June is a tad optimistic, to state the bleedin’ obvious.

Chen isn’t without his critics. Take my work colleague Ashok, for instance, who decided to interrupt this Zoom discussion on vaccine research by phoning me from the park (via 4G). Meticulous research has led *him* to conclude that the bat flu was *actually* triggered by the strategic placement of 5G towers in our cities and towns.

“You should take your money out of the bank before it all disappears,” Ash warns. “Everyone needs to invest in silver and gold... it’s a global crash, money’s going to be worthless.” Six weeks ago, he

couldn't tell a pandemic from a crockpot; now he's an expert on epidemiology and hyperinflation. If he's been sucked in by the Youtube video I'm thinking of, he's probably a grand out of pocket too.

"Have you heard from anyone in the office?" he asks. Hmm, that's a good point. Microsoft Teams seems to have gone from cat-herding contraption to hole in the cloud. Does anyone even log into it anymore? "No, and I don't want to," I say, a bit surprised by how quickly it comes out. "I couldn't care less. I'm happier working on my own." Maybe I should check to see if I got paid this month. Flashback to those Japanese soldier cats in the jungle.

"Me too," he says, perking up. "I can go down the park at lunch time and spend time with my daughter...I don't want to go back into the office! When this is over, we should ask if we can work from home full-time. We don't need to go in. Why don't you ask – "

*Sure.* I'll arrange it all when we return. The boss will take us aside, smile, say yes and congratulate us on getting the job done, despite the myriad distractions like...three-hour lunch breaks...Facebook Live DJ sets...sunny afternoons down the park...half-arsed attempts to learn Hiragana. We'll probably get a bonus too. The lads who held the company together in the planet's darkest hour!

In *no way* will our superiors hound us to come back into the office as soon as the daily death toll dips below 300. Then we can all cram ourselves into train carriages, fall down choking and knock the NHS offline as Phase 2 of the plague begins.

Nah, the best we can probably hope for, I don't tell Ash, is that people won't stand so close to us on the tube at rush hour. Or at the bar. Fake coughs could become the new "placing a Stella can on your folding Thameslink tray".

**16/04**

And then the Four Horsemen dropped a load of Facebook lists on us:

### **TEN THINGS EVERYONE LIKES BUT I DON'T:**

#### **SPIDERMAN**

*Spiderman, Spiderman / Does whatever a spider can!* Does he? Can a spider swing between skyscrapers? Don't think so. If Spiderman was authentic, he'd only abseil down buildings – *and then*, it'd take him half an hour of shooting and re-shooting web and layering it to support his weight. *Even then*, he'd only descend at about a metre per second – and would be totally fucked if someone opened a window.

What else? *Super strength*? Compared to, what...a microbe? *Spider sense*? Are you kidding? Next time you see a spider on the wall, jab your finger directly in front of it and see how quickly it doesn't respond. Sure, if you blow on its legs it'll bolt across the room – but pose a direct threat to it with a biro lid from a millimetre away? No tingle whatsoever. Don't think they even have nervous systems.

In Marvel's fake-news universe, Peter Parker was the hard done-by photographer, constantly bullied by evil *Daily Bugle* editor Jameson. Back in the real world, Jameson should have chinned the whining incel twerp and sent him back to Aunt May's basement! An honest-to-God, hard-working man,

striving to keep his newspaper afloat despite fierce competition from the *New York Post*...and he had a feckless idiot like Pete Parker holding him back!

Jameson's beef was that Parker never managed to snap a photo of Spiderman – which is an ENTIRELY reasonable thing to expect of a photographer on payroll. I genuinely don't understand why Parker didn't just get his mate to dress up as Green Goblin and stage a pretend fight with him on a rooftop while Mary Jane took pics. So...Spiderman loved Mary Jane...but didn't trust her to keep shtum about his identity? A pic of 'Spidey in action' would have kept Jameson off his back and boosted *Daily Bugle* sales. Not only that, it probably would've landed Parker an AP award, thereby massively increasing his chances of securing a better-paid job at the *New York Post*. No wonder The Black Cat dumped him – he had the mind of a tiny spider.

That said, what the hell was *Jameson* playing at? You're telling me he couldn't find any other freelance photographers in a city of 7 million people? Any of whom could have easily taken a pic of Spiderman by dint of not being him? Hardly surprising the *Daily Bugle* went under.

#### LOU REED

Beat his wife up... looked like Lovejoy with dwarfism...collaborated with Metallica, Springsteen and the tuba-playing cunt who wrote *Grandad You're Lovely*...remind me why he was considered remotely 'cool'?? A fucking tuba! 'Cos nothing says '*gender-bending junkie decadence*' like the universal instrument of OAPs carking it down the park bandstand.

#### WHITE NOISE'S "ELECTRIC STORM" LP

I wouldn't dare call this revered electronic classic 'childish'. I mean, it makes *The Aristocats* OST sound like *Threnody For The Victims Of Hiroshima*, but I wouldn't say it's 'childish'. Track 3 is one of the worst things ever recorded and if Delia Derbyshire had strangled newborn kittens in her spare time, you shouldn't have to pretend to like that either.

#### SERGE GAINSBOURG/BRIGITTE BARDOT

Woo-HOO-huh-hoo! Yeah OK, can you give it a rest now? You sound like a ghost slipping on a banana peel. Woo-HOO-huh-hoo! Though it's kinda funny thinking how Bardot started off as this bombshell your dad fancied and became the French Morrissey. Woo-HOO-huh-hoo! Seriously, how did chain-smoking philosophy students get laid to this crap?

#### PORNHUB

The poor man's finding-a-copy-of-*Razzle*-in-the-bushes-with-the-pages-stuck-together.

#### MAKING SOURDOUGH

It's not even that I associate this sourdough horseshittery with paying £30 for RSD-edition Patti Smith LPs, or turning once-mighty greasy spoons into cringeworthy cereal bars, or recording 'cute' ukulele versions of Misfits songs, or selling '*naturally grown goat meat*'. I'm not on some anti-beardsman blitz: I'm not slagging the living piss out of your £8 'gin zine' (well, sort of). It's just that, even in my darkest, most disconsolate hours on this godforsaken rock, it never once occurred to me to seek solace and meaning in fucking *bread*.

## 🦋 BLACK SURGICAL MASKS

What, 135,000 deaths (**er, try 181,000 – me from the future**) aren't 'goth' enough for ya? If you can't get a blue or white mask, wear a conical party hat over your face, like a crap mutant's beak: it'll be about as 'effective' as any 'official' mask (ie, not much) but at least it's funny.

## 🦋 THE X-MEN

They were supposed to be outcasts, society's rejects...but they lived in a giant mansion. Doesn't sound such a wretched existence to me? They had the largesse and technological know-how to build invisible, indestructible battletanks (probably) – why didn't they just go into IT? They could have developed 5G (or even Microsoft Teams) in 1980 and become the richest 'outcasts' on the planet. They didn't even look that weird, compared to the Strontium Dogs, so could have easily passed themselves off as human IT support bods. Except the blue one perhaps...but even that's debatable.

## 🦋 GRANDAD

To be fair, maybe *your* maternal grandad didn't punch your mum in the face when she was *seven years old* because the disobedient brat had the nerve to 'surprise' him by walking into the bedroom while he was on the job with someone who *wasn't* her mum. That grandad certainly wasn't *lovely*, Herbie. One bonus of being born so late was I avoided swapping air with that wanker.

## 🦋 BUYING LOADS OF BEER ONLINE!

**17/04**

Fuck. Just woke up in Hell.

10am. Whuh? Got up and WHUMPPHH – someone split my skull open with a hatchet. *Oh Jesus, this is it...I have the bat flu*. Mad scramble for the Vitamin D...

Oh no, I just got pissed. At 9.30pm yesterday, I'd told myself: *just four cans max, and then an early night*. Can't really remember anything past 2.30am –and by then, I was rolling out the barrels with the foxes of Finchley Road.

This wasn't a headache and a bit of sicking up. It was the kind of hangover where you can't open your right eye. Where you feel like you've been shoved out of a plane and the carpet's the sea, coming up at you fast. Where your voice triggers electric shocks in your ear canals.

You know how you progressively find clues that let you know how bad it got? The first indication was the fact I'd tried to Skype people at 3.20am. People *in New Orleans*. The second was Clifton Chenier's Zydeco classic *King Of The Bayous* lying on the carpet. Ah OK, a pattern's emerging. The third was realising 24 cans had been reduced to six. *Did my neighbours sneak in and steal some?* Oh...the neighbours...shit. Please don't say I played it without headphones.

My only consolation, as my brains oozed out of my ears and the rain lashed down outside, was that I still had a jumbo bag of spicy Thai crackers.

Then I opened the kitchen cupboard.

20/04

People across the land are starting to crack. Pah, I'm an old hand at this! Ten years ago, I was made redundant and went through the same thing as now, pretty much. Reduced social contact; avoiding the pub; leaching unaffordable '70s dub rarities off Soulseek and watching BoobTube videos of bikers fleeing the police; it's like 2010, all over again.

You're not supposed to admit it, with all the mass, unmarked graves filling up, but it's actually *really cool* waking up to the sunshine every day...no boss lurching around the place, or dickheads scrambling for seats on the Northern Line. My Oyster card already looks like a museum piece. I'm sure I'll be sickeningly wistful when I look back on these lockdown days. Assuming I make it through.

That said, there's the very real possibility of going *completely bananas*. As a zen master from Milton Keynes once told me, humans are perilously prone to surfing the celestial sofa. You live 20 minutes from the nearest bus stop and your life sucks...it's an unbearable slog that sours every journey. Then, you move somewhere five minutes from the nearest bus stop, and rejoice – but, a month later, that five-minute walk's become a 'right trek'. You move to a place with a bus stop right outside your front door – and suddenly walking downstairs feels like a polar expedition. It's a bad trap to fall into.

Truth is, I've become *way too cosy* not having to venture any further than 400m from my flat. If this carries on much longer, I'm gonna hole up in the wardrobe. But sod it – it looks kinda fun in there, y'know?

Anyway, something really odd happened about 30 minutes ago.

I was crossing the outer plains of my bedroom, before the jet took off and we sailed over the gargantuan canyon of my living room. After finally reaching the hall, we descended and bore right, gliding past the snow-covered washing machine and the brightly lit kitchen steppes...veering further out towards the toilet...

...where I realised, for the second or third time since this whole plague thang began...

I've just thought *we* instead of *I*.

I live alone and the only visitor I've had in eight weeks has been a massive spider in the bathroom. Who, by the way, is welcome to stay for as long as he or she likes. They can bring their mates over too. I'm no arachnophobe.

But this *we* I'm talking about...it doesn't include the spider, and it ain't no royal 'we'.

Why have I started imagining there are two of us cooped up in here? That I passed them earlier this morning on my way to the kitchen? That they'll be back soon? *Who are they?*

And did *they* take some of those beers?

**Anyone live in Colindale/Mill Hill/Hendon area and want to swap a 1000 piece puzzle for another one? We don't mind what the picture is. 😊 Drop me a DM.**

# REVIEWS

## VARIOUS ARTISTS : "BLACK RIOT: EARLY JUNGLE, RAVE AND HARDCORE" CD (Soul Jazz)

Soul Jazz frustrates me. I don't know why they're so obsessed with space. Remember that acid house comp. they did where they spent more time and money making a corny comic booklet about aliens than actually mastering the CD (which sounded awful, even with Larry Heard on it)?

So what's the difference between this and any cheapo '94 jungle comp with lurid graffiti lettering and a cartoon DJ with a lion's head on the cover? The latter was *better*. I guess some bodgy 'black hole' artwork looks more intellekkshual. Like most Soul Jazz releases (except *Studio One Rockers* and *New York Noise Vol. 3*) this consists of: two classics; a bunch of mediocre tracks that nobody really listened to at the time; and a couple that make you wonder why they were even selected. *COULD DO BETTER*, as the nuns at St Vincent's used to stamp my RE homework. (ULRIKE MEINKRAFT)

## ROBERT TURMAN: "FLUX" CD (Spectrum Spools)

A discovery care of the ineffably great No Place Like Drone podcast (<https://www.mixcloud.com/noplacelikedrone/stream/>) , which is the best thing that's happened in Dublin since club-wielding jaguines chased Bono down the street in 1987. 'Minimalist' doesn't do this justice: track 2 sounds so ethereal, I thought it might blow away if I didn't close the window. Complements the current hushed midnight vibe perfectly (fox sex romps aside).

Turman contributed to the best (some might say 'only listenable') NON record (*Mode Of Infection*) and co-starred with Aaron Dilloway on *Blizzard*. *Flux* is a completely different bag of crackers, though. The first half feels like furtively spying on a slightly depressed Chinese spectre playing with a music box. The second half grates *a bit* as Turman introduces a piano to proceedings, and that instrument's always rubbed me up the wrong way. I blame *Ebony and Ivory*. Still, a nice antidote to the other noisy bollocks I've been playing recently. (MARTIN C)

## SLAV TO THE RHYTHM #3

My name is Jakov Colo. You may know me as the cutest of the blessed Children of Medjugorje (the originals, not the SJW Marvel remake). The Virgin Mary's been appearing to me on and off since 1981 and recently informed me that Earth will completely spin off its axis in 202- but enough of that. I wanted to hear some Slavic disco, so I tuned into this unusual but immensely satisfying internet radio show. Every tune was a zinger, especially the one by Zdenka, who is 'well rude'. The full set can be found at: <https://www.mixcloud.com/TheNeonHospice/slav-to-the-rhythm/>.

Sadly though, the bizarre pronunciations of one of the DJs forced me to Google some of the song titles. I'd just entered "MY MUM VIDEO SEX" into search when the Blessed Virgin materialised right behind me! She was very angry about this, and is now refusing to reveal when the lockdown will be lifted. But after I promised to visit the weeping statues of Knock, she did disclose that "*Mixcloud is going to Hell in a ručna košare*", so hopefully this show will get a re-up on a more user-friendly site at some point. You know, one where you can rewind. (JAKOV COLO)



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